

The Queer Mummer

An Exhibition Statement

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THE QUEER MUMMER

Growing up in rural Newfoundland, I always felt like an outlier. At first, I thought that, maybe, it was because my father was transferred for work a lot. I was able to make a lot of friends – especially girls – in primary and elementary school because I was an energetic, friendly, flamboyant kid. Once my family moved to Corner Brook while I entered Grade 7, I realized why I felt like an outlier: I discovered I was gay – and so did my classmates. While same-sex couples could get married in Canada by the time, I realized it still was not okay to be gay in Newfoundland. I was bullied by my peers and felt like even more of an outcast. I withdrew, attempting to hide my flamboyant personality and butch it up so that I could pass as straight. When asked if I had a crush, I lied and would name my best friend, hoping people would assume that I meant it. Only after coming out to my friends during my Grade 12 graduation party did I feel comfortable being flamboyant and queer. But I still feel as if I have to butch it up while in the province, as gender roles are highly enforced socially and those who do not abide by their prescribed gender's norms are subject to verbal and physical abuse.

How does one re-inhabit a space that was once their own with a newly revealed queer identity? Can one use cultural customs that belong to the centre in order to reclaim and reconfigure those spaces from a new location in the margins? Through blending the art form of drag and the Newfoundland tradition of mummering, my thesis exhibition *The Queer Mummer* deconstructs gender norms and homophobic attitudes surrounding being openly queer. This essay will first explore the history of mummering, then explore the history and herstory of drag, and then develop how the two are related and how I use both performance practices to challenge prevalent heterosexist attitudes

both in Newfoundland and Labrador and Western society in general. This essay will finally explore my experiences in the drag community in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where I moved to complete my graduate degree, and my documentation of my time spent in Saskatoon. Through becoming the alter-ego The Queer Mummer, I hope to remind Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and others, of the history of performance in Newfoundland and drag's part in that history.

THE HISTORY OF MUMMERING

Mumming, also known as mumming, jannying, and jennyng in different outport communities in Newfoundland, can be traced back hundreds of years to England, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was practiced as an old Christmas custom ("Performing Arts"). Originally a type of folk theatre and best described as an early type of pantomime, mummering in England would traditionally include the mummer's play, which would generally be based off of the legend of St. George and The Dragon (Barrow). Mummers, the actors in the play, would be dressed in disguise, and go door to door and sing and perform for their neighbours in their homes, as well as in public places (Winick). The practice of mummering can be found throughout the world, from Bulgaria to Australia due to British colonization, and found its way to the island of Newfoundland (Winick). It is unknown when mummering made its way to Newfoundland, though the earliest records date back to 1819 ("Performing Arts").

The Disguise

Unlike mummering in England and elsewhere, Newfoundland mummering focuses mainly on the informal house visit, in which a group of people, dress in ridiculous attire and cover their faces in whatever they can find, whether it be a lace doily or a pillowcase with eyeholes. The neighbour that the mummers visited would have to guess who each mummer was, as communities were small enough that everyone knew each other. It was common for the host to serve food and drinks to the mummers. Once the neighbour correctly determined who was whom, the mummers would remove their masks, socialize for a bit longer, and then go on to the next house.

As outport communities are so small, mummers have to cleverly disguise themselves in order for their neighbours to not recognize them right away. Participants often avoid wearing their own clothes, as the neighbours know what they would wear, so it is common to wear clothing that is either too small or too big (Laskow). Cross-dressing is also common – men dress as women and women as men. It is not uncommon to see a man wearing a stuffed size 42 bra on the outside of his outfit, and not uncommon to see a woman wearing ‘stereotypical male’ outfits, such as oilskins and red-checked jackets (“Mummering and Jannying”). Mummers also often stuff their clothes with items to change their silhouette. Pillows and old clothes are transformed into pregnant bellies, large bums, and humpbacks (“Mummering and Jannying”). As Sarah Laskow states, “Mummering in Newfoundland is all about reversals—turning the normal world topsy-turvy. Men might dress as women and women as men. Friends dressed in costume became strangers, and the odd creatures that visited in the night



Fig. 1 “Unknown mummers in Harrington Harbour”, circa 1950s. Courtesy of Sharon Chubbs Ransom, Jim Ransom, and Dale Jarvis (Laskow).

were revealed to be close friends.” The end result is a misshapen, often genderless stranger (fig. 1).

How Mummers Act

In order to completely disguise themselves, mummers often change the way they act and talk. It is not uncommon for mummers to say they hail from far away places. Mary Robertson states that some common places include: the North Pole, Liar’s Arm, Tar Bay, the moon, Hong Kong, across the ocean, Limbo, Moncton, Italy, or from the mustard factory (63). For example, someone mummering in Conche would say, “they came either from the North Pole or Roddickton, the next community. As Conche was snowbound in the winter, Roddickton was just as improbable as the North Pole” (63).

Mummers generally disguise their voices, which is described as ‘Mummer Talk’ or ‘Janney Talk’ by Robertson (78). The most popular way to speak while mummering is through ingressive speech, where one inhales while speaking instead of exhaling, popularized through musical group Simani’s “The Mummer’s Song” (“Mummering and

Jannying”). Ingressive speech is used in Newfoundland sometimes when saying ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘hmmm’, and is generally used as, “an agreement marker with what’s already been said” (Bird). As voice tone cannot be heard while using ingressive speech, it is one of the best ways to disguise one’s voice while mummering (Bird). Some mummers choose to change the pitch of their voice, “using a high, squeaky voice or a low, rough voice” (“Mummering and Jannying”). It is also common for mummers to speak with objects in their mouths, such as marbles and buttons, as well as speaking into bottles, replying in various accents, or choosing to be mute (Robertson 80).

In order to maintain their disguise, mummers also change the way they walk, as well as change their mannerisms. Mummers who cross-dress often take on stereotypical mannerisms of the opposite sex, whereas those disguised as grandmothers and grandfathers hunch over and walk with canes (“Mummering and Jannying”). Mummers also bring along homemade instruments and props to entertain their hosts, referencing the traditional mummering practices from England. One of the most well-known handmade instruments is the ugly stick, which is essentially an old broom, mop, or stick, about four feet in length adorned with, “bottle caps, tin cans, small bells and other noisemakers”, which is played by, “thumping the stick, and striking its attachments with a drumstick” (Maynard). Other homemade instruments include musical spoons, baking-pan drums, washboards, and combs covered with tissue paper (Robertson 115). Accordions (fig. 2), fiddles, mouth organs, and tin whistles are also examples of real instruments used by mummers (115). Sometimes, if a group of mummers do not have any instruments with them, they sing chin music, a style of improvised rhythmic music comprising of nonsense words (Maynard). Some



Fig. 2 “Mummers at Tom Sullivan’s house”, circa 1980s. Courtesy of Gerald Pocius and Dale Jarvis (Laskow).

mummers go as far as to bring a boombox and play “The Mummer’s Song” on blast (“Mummering and Jannyng”).

Mummers entertain their guests by dancing, and are known mostly for doing a hard stomping step dance (“Mummering and Jannyng”). They often dance with the hosts and, when no one else was available, with brooms and mops (“Mummering and Jannyng”). They also misbehave, often dancing, “into other prohibited 'inner parts' of the house...the parlour, living room, and bedrooms” (Robertson 66). They pull pranks on the hosts, and the hosts, in return, pull pranks on the mummers. However, not all mummers were good natured and out for fun.

Illegal Mummering

Mummering in the 1800s was not always that innocent. Excessive alcohol consumption fuelled violence, which did not help with existing religious and political tensions between Catholics and Protestants on the island (“Performing Arts”). Some

groups of drunk mummers walked with sticks or bladders filled with rocks, and would use their disguises to beat up others (Laskow). Heritage Newfoundland & Labrador states that, “for a time these practices [mumming] helped to maintain the status quo by providing an annual release mechanism” (“Performing Arts”). However, the straw that broke the donkey’s back was the axe murder of a fisherman from Bay Roberts in 1860 committed by a group of mummers (Laskow). Mumming was then banned in 1861, only to be made legal again more than a century later in 1991 (Laskow). This ban did not stop those living in rural communities from mumming, as law enforcement was scarce in the outport. However, towards the end of the 20th century, the practice began to decline as the cod fishery collapsed, the economy changed, and, “migration meant that more of your neighbors might be actual strangers” (Laskow).

Revival

Mumming has had a recent resurgence in Newfoundland in the past four decades, though there have been changes made to the practice. The idea of the mummer being a stranger, “appears to be more of a real threat than the playful one enacted by mummers of previous generations in communities where there would be no real strangers” (“Mumming and Jannying”). Therefore, mummers may call their neighbours ahead of time, and may only visit homes when there is a kitchen party.

In 2009, the Intangible Cultural Heritage division of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and Memorial University’s Folklore Department teamed up and created the Mummers Festival, a folklife festival in St. John’s which included a parade, workshops, exhibits, a film night and public interviews with mummers (Davis

43). Folklife festival coordinator Ryan Davis states that planning for the Festival was, “influenced by the Folklore discipline, guided by principles of cultural conservation and informed by the scholarly work of folklorists sensitive to the issues of cultural brokerage,” and that, “models like the Smithsonian Folklife Festival were useful for their ethnographic approach to planning and for their populist-based perspective on cultural democracy” (43). Essentially, Davis states that, “by recognizing culture and environment as an indivisible whole, our approach advocates heritage work that maintains the sustainability of habitat by seeking to safeguard both tradition-bearers and the required conditions for cultural reproduction (43-44). The first festival saw 300 mummers show up, “sober on a drizzly Sunday afternoon for a parade that had never happened before” (43). This approach allowed the public to dress up in their own costumes and present their own versions of mummers, whether they had instruments or not, and in effect caused the mummers to be complete strangers again. The Mummers Festival integrates an approach that encourages, “the contemporary uses of tradition by giving a diverse public the opportunity to explore mummering as a relevant tool in the multivocal expression of identity” (44). This revival offers both a return to roots for long-time habitants of the island, as well as an invitation for those new to the island to participate.

Mummering has become extremely marketable in Newfoundland and linked to a popular form of cultural tourism, and mummers could be seen in, “paintings, illustrations, photos, t-shirts and commercial prints; they take the form of Christmas ornaments, sculptures, and dressed dolls; they grace the sides of coffee mugs, beer bottles, and wine bags; in feature films, documentaries, radio commercials, and television features” (45). This marketability created, “mummers-for-hire”, who, “dance

around banquet halls at conventions for visitors to the province” (45). Mummering has become a symbol of regional identity, and is a social custom that highlights the importance being open minded, treating strangers as human beings, and not discriminating against them because of the way they look, act, or talk.

THE HISTORY AND HERSTORY OF DRAG

Historically, drag has been associated with theatre since at least the age of the ancient Greeks. While Greek theatre began around the worship of Dionysus, whose rites were carried out by women, women were banned from performing onstage (Gewertz). Instead, men performed the women's roles, as, “the Greeks believed that allowing women to perform publicly would be too dangerous and that having men portray them neutralized the danger”, as a woman performing on stage could be ‘too irresistible’ (Gewertz). European Christians such as Shakespeare, whose plays were acted entirely by men, continued this ban on female stagecraft. In fact, some plays such as *Twelfth Night* were based entirely around cross-dressing (Roschke). The ban was upheld until the 17th century when women began to appear in a new genre of theatre named opera (fig. 3) (Gewertz). The inclusion of women on the stage, however, did not end the practice of drag: instead, it flourished, as female performers began to impersonate men (Gewertz). However, women were still not seen on stage as often as their male counterparts as writer Ken Gewertz states, “some of the most popular plays of the 19th and 20th centuries have featured men impersonating women, usually out of necessity rather than choice. “Charley’s Aunt” by Brandon Thomas (debuted on Broadway in 1893 and revived many times since) is a prime example of the genre”.



Fig. 3 John Brandard, *Miss Fairbrother as Abdallah in The Forty-Thieves* (Louisa Fairbrother ('Mrs FitzGeorge')), 1845. Hand-coloured lithograph.

It is important to note that drag is not only seen in Western culture: drag has been and is still used to this day in many forms of theatre around the world. For example, author Jonathan David states that, “in Japanese theatre...drag divides the Kabuki and Noh dramas. Noh derives from Dengaku, a folk dance associated with rice planting and fertility, and in its ancient, self-enclosed spiritual world, 'female' actors wearing masks follow stylized routines in a complex and rarefied pattern of symbolic gestures”, whereas Kabuki, created in the 17th century, uses female impersonators who are, “carefully made-up, speak in falsetto voices, and move to suggest the essence of femininity” (qtd in Roschke).

Drag and Homosexuality

While one does not need to be a member of the queer community to take part in drag, drag itself has been associated with queer culture in Western society for quite a long time. In an interview with Wilder Davies in *Time Magazine*, drag historian Joe E. Jeffreys states that drag had become associated with homosexuality, “around at the 1930s, when the field of sexology — the study of sex, sexual practices among people in cultures [first developed in the 19th century] — develops all these ideas and categories, who people are, why people do the things they do” (Davies). Specifically, the field of sexology was interested in the ‘third sex’, described as a masculine woman or a feminine man who desires the



Fig. 4 Jennie Livingston, Still of Pepper LaBeija in *Paris is Burning*, 1991. Film still.

same sex (Roschke). Famous queer drag performers existed before this time, such as famous male impersonator Annie Hindle, who disguised herself as a man named Charles when she married her wife Annie Ryan in 1886 (Summers 124). However, drag’s association with the LGBTQ2+ community became cemented in the 20th century once popular culture linked drag and homosexuality, birthing the modern drag queen.

Ballrooms, Pink Flamingos, and RuPaul

Drag fashion shows began to emerge around the 1920s in New York City, though they excluded black performers unless they lightened their skin to appear white (qtd. in Buckner). Fed up by these racist policies, the queer black community created its own ballroom scene in the 1950s (Buckner). While the ballroom scene of the 1960s had very few categories,, with most queens portraying Las Vegas showgirls, the Stonewall riots in 1969, as American cultural anthropologist Carsten Balzer notes, “changed self-perceptions within the subculture: from feeling guilty and apologetic to feelings of self-acceptance and pride”, resulting in members of the LGBTQ2+ community, especially queer people of colour, to come out and join the scene, helping it grow into a number of categories that were inclusive for everyone (qtd. in Buckner). Categories such as executive realness, butch queen, and look queen allowed people of all backgrounds to walk in the balls (Buckner). Through the ballroom scene came the mighty drag houses, essentially serving as a second family for those whose families abandoned them (Buckner). A member of a house would take the name of the house as their last name: for example, Pepper LaBeija (fig. 4), one of the most famous queens in ball culture, was the mother of the House of LaBeija. To this day, many drag houses from the early ballroom days still exists with hundreds of family members such as the House of Xtravaganza, House of Ninja, and House of Aviance.

The inclusive space of the ballroom scene coincided with the changing party scene: in the late 1980s and 1990s in New York City, the Club Kid scene sparked by James St. James (fig. 5) and Michael Alig ruled the night. The Club Kids (fig. 6), whose looks resembled more alien than human, drew their inspiration in their looks from



Left: Fig. 5 Alexis di Biasio, *James St. James*, one of the original club kids, 1990. Photograph.

Right: Fig. 6 Alexis di Biasio, *Club kids Keda*, left, and *Sacred Boy* at the *Limelight nightclub*, 1992. photograph

clowns, punks, and S&M (Teicher). Many club kids were also inspired by Australian-born British-based performance artist Leigh Bowery, known for his outrageous gender-bending outfits. Bowery, himself, helped start a similar nightlife scene in England, first with the underground party scene *Taboo* and then later with the club *Taboo*, known for its decadence, outlandish costumes, and defiance of sexual conventions (Mansfield). In her series of videos focusing on the history of drag, American drag queen Jaymes Mansfield states, “The buzz around the Club Kid scene was so heavy that they would go on to make appearances on many major talkshows in the 1990s, providing a new platform for this heightened version of art” (Mansfield 00:01:39-00:01:48).

The Club Kids were not the only drag performers to make it to the living room TV: American filmmaker John Waters’ camp classics *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974), *Polyester* (1981), and *Hairspray* (1988) all star his muse, the drag queen

Divine, known out of drag as Glenn Milstead. In fact, Divine is so well-known both in the LGBTQ2+ community and in mainstream culture that she served as the inspiration for the Disney villain Ursula The Sea Witch in the animated film *The Little Mermaid* (Pasulka and Ferree). However, the drag queen that mainstream culture is the most aware of – so much so that she has her own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame – is American drag queen and Emmy Award-winner RuPaul. RuPaul first appeared on living room screens in 1989 in The B-52's music video "Love Shack" and would go on to become an international icon through her debut single "Supermodel (You Better Work)" (Parker). RuPaul's popularity skyrocketed in 2009 and has only increased since the premier of her reality tv show *Rupaul's Drag Race*, a competition in which a dozen or so drag queens from across the US compete in drag based challenges including design, acting, comedy, and, of course, lip-syncing in order to win the title of America's Next Drag Superstar (Roschke).

The show's success won RuPaul her first Emmy Award, though more importantly the show has helped expose the world to issues that affect the LGBTQ2+ community: in season one, drag queen Ongina, "revealed an HIV diagnosis. In season eight, Kim Chi talked about how she'd kept her drag persona from her parents. In season nine, Sasha Velour and Valentina got real about their struggles with eating disorders while Peppermint came out as transgender" (Roschke). The show has even seen spinoffs such as *Drag Race Thailand* and Chile's *The Switch Drag Race*. *Rupaul's Drag Race* has and continues to inspire the LGBTQ2+ community, even inspiring many members of the LBGTQ2+ community including myself to become drag performers.

We're All Born Naked And The Rest Is Drag

While the majority of drag performers are homosexual, drag is not just for homosexual cisgender men: anyone can perform in drag. Drag, as stated by Jeffreys, “is anytime that someone is putting on clothing that is considered to be not appropriate to them, and then wearing it with some type of ironic distance. In its purest form, drag is when a person goes into a dressing room, they put this thing on, they go out on stage and they perform, and [after the show] they take it off” (Davies). For example, American actor Tyler Perry has created a plethora of movies through his character Madea, a tough, elderly black woman. Jeffreys believes that the association between drag and the LGBTQ2+ community stems from the fact that, “once the sex line is crossed, I think the gender line is no big deal. Having the outsider perspective, they are able to look at and see things about gender that perhaps somebody who doesn’t question the overall society as much, doesn’t necessarily see as readily” (Davies).

As Western culture’s perceptions surrounding gender change from the idea of a gender binary (only men and women) to a gender spectrum, drag itself continues to change itself to reflect these evolving social constructs. It is not uncommon to go to a gay bar and see a variety of performers, from the traditional fishy drag queen, who can easily be mistaken as a cisgender woman, to the over-the-top bio queen, a term used to describe cisgender women who perform as drag queens (though the term is interchangeable with faux queen, hyper queen, and femme queen). In an interview with *Big Think*, American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler states that gender is performative, in that, “we act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman” (Butler, “Judith Butler: Your Behavior

Creates Your Gender” 00:00:34-00:00:43). Butler goes on to state that there exists social pressures and powers, such as formal practices like psychiatric normalization as well as informal practices such as bullying, that attempt to force people to perform the gender that they were assigned at birth (Butler, “Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender”). Drag, from its early beginnings to now, has continuously transgressed against Western culture’s existing views surrounding gender constructs. As Western societal constructs surrounding gender and sexuality tend to affect members of the LGBTQ2+ community, they are more likely to question those constructs and to deconstruct them, or as the drag queen Sasha Velour would say, tear them apart.

QUEERING MUMMERING

I started attending local drag nights in Saskatoon in January 2017. I was a big fan of drag and watched the drag reality show *RuPaul’s Drag Race* religiously prior to this. It is important to note that the first time that I was in drag as an out queer man (out with my friends) was in the summer of 2014 while I was abroad for a semester in the United Kingdom. Having practiced painting my face a few times at home and attending queer balls in Newfoundland while my parents were away, I wanted to try going out in drag in Saskatoon. Melancholia, my drag persona, was born when I did a performance piece called Suck, Squeeze, Bang, Blow in February 2017. My first time out to the clubs in drag in Saskatoon was a few days later, and soon enough I began performing on stage.

Becoming The Queer Mummer

I wanted to make art using this persona, and began researching the history and herstory of LGBTQ2+ Canadians. It was around this time that I flew home to Newfoundland for a summer break. While home, I accidentally ordered a corset for my drag to my house in Newfoundland, forcing me to finally come out to my parents both as a gay man and as a drag queen. While extremely supportive of the former, my parents were scared for my safety with the latter; they were concerned that Saskatoon and my MFA program had changed me somehow. I found myself questioning my decision to do my thesis on drag and queer theory, and struggled to find a way to help my parents understand drag.

One day, while knitting clothing for my drag persona, I began thinking about the similarities between drag and mummering. Both drag and mummering are forms of cross-dressing: like mummering, every drag performer is different, whether they are a drag queen, drag king, genderf*ck performer, club kid, etc. Both are types of performance and have a history with theatre. Both drag performers and mummers change their body proportions either through padding, stuffing, tucking, binding, or cinching. I decided to modify the outfit I was knitting and, through this decision, became The Queer Mummer.

Blending Drag and Mummering

The title of The Queer Mummer is, itself, a tautology: the traditional use of the word 'queer' means strange, and mummers are essentially people dressed as strangers. Also, mummering, itself, is a custom that queers public space, as each

mummer questions the gender binary. Therefore, it would be correct to say that every single mummer is queer. I use the title knowing this.

The Queer Mummer is a trickster: I use the drag tradition of camp humour and the foolishness associated with mummering to make the public questions social norms and constructs. For example, I reference a joke about safe sex in *Silly Willy* (fig. 7), the



Fig. 7 Lucas Morneau, *Silly Willy*, 2017-18. Digital Photograph.

loom-knit dress and hat I was working on when I first thought of the persona The Queer Mummer. The dress and hat are knit to resemble a condom, and the hat, when its tip is pinched, unrolls like a condom into a balaclava. *Silly Willy*, which is also the name of the mummer who wears the dress and hat, has a matching ugly stick, which includes a similar hat for the stick, beer caps, and fake nails as noise makers.

References to drag culture, queer culture, and Newfoundland culture dominate the visual symbolism of The Queer Mummer. I use traditional Newfoundland crafts like crochet and knitting to make my outfits, and adorn them in sequins, Swarovski crystals, and fringe in reference of the outfits of drag performers like performance artist Leigh Bowery, legendary ballroom queen Pepper LaBeija, and the Glamazon herself, RuPaul Charles. While I do wear masks and veils, I also apply makeup, using techniques that were made popular by drag artists such as Mathu Andersen, Raven, and Divine. I pad, tuck, and cinch my body, transforming my body from that of a cisgender man to a queer body that refuses to fit the gender binary.



Left: Fig. 8 Lucas Morneau, *Inky Twinky*, 2018. Digital Photograph.

Right: Fig. 9 Lucas Morneau, *Fag Hag*, 2017-18. Digital Photograph

The Outfits

Each outfit worn by The Queer Mummer has its own name. In fact, each outfit can be considered a different mummer. The outfits can be split into two categories: those that are based off of LGBTQ2+ history and myths and histories from Newfoundland, and those based off of reclamation and upcycling. *Inky Twinky* (fig. 8), for example, is a crocheted cephalopod that references the story of the giant squid in Newfoundland as well as Ursula the Sea Witch from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, whose design was based off of infamous Baltimore drag queen Divine. Some mummerns in the series reference both categories. For example, *Fag Hag*

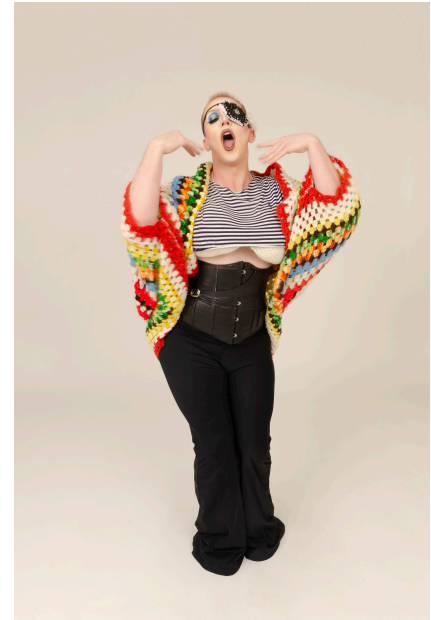


Fig. 10 Lucas Morneau,
Skeet Burns, 2018.
Digital Photograph.

(fig.9) reclaims a number of pejoratives (fag, hag, and fag hag) while also referencing the old hag myths of Newfoundland and the historical witch hunts in Europe which outed and killed many queer individuals. *Skeet Burns* (fig. 10), which uses a pejorative term used in Newfoundland describing lower class youth, both references the history of piracy in Newfoundland and 1980s queer icons such as Annie Lennox, David Bowie, Grace Jones, Boy George, and Pete Burns, the latter of whom *Skeet Burns* is named after.

My first exploration with recycling materials in order to create new looks was through the outfit *Lumber Jackoff* (fig. 11), which is comprised of flannel shirts passed down to me by male family members (my brother, my father, my grandfather, and my

granduncle) as well as a few second-hand shirts bought at charity shops. *Lumber Jackoff*, specifically, uses flannel shirts that were near the end of their lifespan in order to memorialize these hand-me-downs. I also reused materials in order to reference mummering, as most mummer outfits are created by using whatever one can find lying around their house and giving it a new lease on life, even if only for one night. Similarly, *Awww Luhhh* (fig. 12) uses both upcycled yarn bought at charity shops as well as hand-dyed superwash merino wool from Newfoundland. *Bay Thang* (fig. 13) uses a mixed of found clothing, upcycled yarn,



Left: Fig. 11 Lucas Morneau, *Lumber Jackoff*, 2018. Digital Photograph.
Right: Fig. 12 Lucas Morneau, *Awww Luhhh*, 2017-18. Digital Photography.



Left: Fig. 13 Lucas Morneau, *Bay Thang*, 2018. Digital Photograph.

Right: Fig. 14 Lucas Morneau, *Froot Loop*, 2018. Digital Photograph.

and clothing I still use in my daily life. *Froot Loop* (fig. 14), the last in the series, is made of upcycled yarn from blankets.

Using Queer Personas To Subvert Social Norms

Throughout the project, I learned more and more about queer artists who use openly queer personas to queer public space and to challenge homophobic and heterosexist attitudes. For example, I was inspired by the *Lesbian National Parks and Services* performances by Canadian artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, in which Dempsey and Millan dress as National Park Rangers in Banff National Park and interact with tourists through handing out brochures and staging recruitment tables (Francis

131). Through this performance, Dempsey and Millan bring awareness to the fact that National Parks have been designed for cisgender heterosexual white families, and that they are heteronormative and colonialist in design. In fact, National Parks were first suggested to be established by the state by American painter George Catlin, who believed that both First Nations people and the buffalo were going extinct, and that the state should create a park in which First Nations people would be a spectacle for white people to gawk at (Francis 131).

Similarly, Canadian artist Adrian Stimson uses his anti-colonial, gender-bending persona Buffalo Boy to camp up colonialism and sexuality (Rice and Taunton 18). In their 2006 performance *what about the Red Man*, Buffalo Boy, dressed as their alter ego Shaman Exterminator, combats misrepresentations of Aboriginal traditional knowledge, “running in every direction of a grand space where buffalo once roamed free, exorcizing misguided truths by crawling ritualistically across the desert of Burning Man and touching upon notions of greed and guilt, obedience and mischief” (Rice and Taunton 18-20).

As *The Queer Mummer*, I subvert the established heterosexual norms and assumptions made about the human body. As American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler points out in her article “Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy”:

How do drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons enter into the political field? They make us not only question what is real, and what “must” be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted.

These practices of instituting new modes of reality take place in part through the scene of embodiment, where the body is not understood as a static and accomplished fact, but as an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone. (29)

Through the use of drag, I question the dominant heterosexual norms prominent in Newfoundland, as well as elsewhere in Western society, which dictate that there is only two possibilities for gender, and those who fall outside the norm of a two sex, two-gender system are dismissed or dehumanized. The Queer Mummer serves as reminder that mummering, itself, is a custom that queers space. Both drag and mummering are tools for the multi-vocal expression of identity, and both blur and subvert the gender binary. Therefore, both drag and mummering queer public space in one way or another and give license to possibilities beyond the two sex, two gender system; offering concrete reconfigurations of gender and gender performance.



Fig. 15 Lucas Morneau, Making Turbulence (later renamed Awww Luhhh) at Brewed Awakening, 2017.

Using Traditional Crafts To Queer Public Space

While creating The Queer Mummer's outfits, I decided to teach myself how to crochet. I felt it necessary to create the outfits myself through traditionally domestic practices due to their association with the feminine. While on a trip to Newfoundland, I decided to use my newly acquired crochet skills to reclaim both public and private

spaces that are predominately masculine and heterosexual in order to queer those spaces (fig. 15). As Emma Sheppard states in her important article ““It’s Not a Hobby, It’s a Post-apocalyptic Skill”: Space, Feminism, Queer, and Sticks and String”, crafts such as knitting and crocheting can become sites of resistance and queer performance:

Knitting can also be queered in the how and where it is performed – and who it is performed by; masculine cis-man knitting is as transgressive as a drag king; knitting in public queers that public space by introducing a private hobby into it...using a traditionally feminine craft to queer previously masculine space, and reclaim it as the space of the feminine and a space of feminine gender performance. (Sheppard)

I am able to queer these spaces without even speaking: simply by the act of crocheting, I am queering public space, affecting the mood of the space while I quietly establish my own queer presence through a focused, meditative, traditionally feminine action.

DOCUMENTING QUEER CULTURE

When I first started performing in the gay clubs in Saskatoon, I felt it was necessary to document my experience in the clubs as well as document the scene itself as it was a community in the margins of society. Inspired by photographers like Nan Goldin, whose used documentary photographs of her experiences living with members of the queer community in her series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1980-86), and John Simone, who documented the New York City drag scene in the 1980s, I began to photograph Saskatoon’s drag scene. At first, I began to document my looks and performances through digital photographs and videos through my cellphone. While the



Left: Fig. 16 Lucas Morneau, *Melancholia Backstage at The 3rd Annual Diva Awards, September 22nd 2017, 2017*. Instant Film.
 Right: Fig. 17 Lucas Morneau, *Melancholia at Kiki Roquette's Stepdwn, February 19th, 2018, 2018*. Instant Film.

immediacy of digital photography was a positive, I felt that having an immediate physical record of the document was vital to the project.

Documenting Queer Bodies

In the summer of 2017, I began experimenting with instant film, specifically Fujifilm Instax film as it is readily available nowadays, to document my drag looks. Instant film allowed for the immediacy of digital photography while providing a physical form of the photography (fig. 16, 17). This way, a physical, archival document existed the very moment the photograph was taken. I found myself immediately hooked to the process and began shooting other drag performers in the city (fig. 18, 19). This not only

allowed me to meet more experienced performers from the city, but also meet performers from all over the province. It allowed me to break the ice between people who were unfamiliar with my drag aesthetic and possibly put off by it; sadly, there still exists discrimination in the drag community. Performers whose styles and aesthetics differ greatly from the drag norm of that city are often ostracized in tight-knit communities.

An important aspect in photographing my fellow performers was to get their consent and to make sure they were comfortable being photographed. My goal was not to exploit them and their bodies like photographers have done in the past, but to celebrate them. Queer bodies, in general, have historically been viewed as other and been put on display for the enjoyment of mainstream audiences against these individuals' wishes. For example, American photographer Diane Arbus' photographs of members of the LGBTQ2+ community have largely been viewed by the LGBTQ2+ as objectifying (Miriam). Arbus even stripped down drag queens and trans women to portray them as men (Miriam). LGBTQ2+ individuals should not be viewed as fetishized objects, but as human beings. With my photographs, I chose to let the subjects choose the areas they wanted to be photographed in and how they wanted to be photographed. Being able to talk one-on-one with these performers while taking their photos not only allowed me the time to explain my reasons for doing drag and the references, but also, in turn, made the performers comfortable enough to the point where each night, they would approach me for a photo, which I was happy to snap for them.



Left: Fig. 18. Lucas Morneau, *Amy Grant at the Miss Divas Awards, February 17th, 2018, 2018*. Instant Film.
 Right: Fig. 19 Lucas Morneau, *Yada Ya Oughtta Book Ahead at Kiki Roquette's Stepdawn, February 19th, 2018, 2018*. Instant Film.

#Mask4Mask

An important aspect of this project was the documentation of queer culture in order to keep its histories and herstories alive. While, at first, this was done through a series of instant film photographs, I found it necessary to document all the makeup looks I created for the series. While makeup did not mask or veil my face like the physical masks and veils I created, it helped change my appearance in a way that I could just paint my face and look like a complete different person (an important aspect to mummering). In order to reference makeup as a sort of mask, I created monotype prints of my makeup (fig. 20).

The monotypes, titled *#Mask4Mask*, are created by placing a makeup wipe on my painted face and pressing the wipe with my fingers to lift the makeup gently off my

face onto the wipe. The wipe is then lain onto a flat surface to dry. Finally, the wipe are sprayed with hairspray to fix the makeup to the wipe. The final result is a monotype of the makeup, creating a sort of death mask of the makeup look. While the prints memorialize the makeup creations, the prints themselves can be worn by others as masks: the makeup look can essentially be worn again and again, though its look becomes distorted by the wipe and the printing process.



Fig. 20 Prints from #Mask4Mask, 2017-18. Monotype.

The title of the series itself is a play on words; in the gay community, many gay men refuse to date openly femme men, therefore they use the hashtag ‘#Masc4Masc’ in their online dating profiles. It is hard to pinpoint why this happens: it could be related to toxic masculinity or internalized homophobia. By altering the term to ‘#Mask4Mask’, I am poking fun at this exclusionary practice in the LGBTQ2+ community in hopes to help deconstruct and, in the end, exterminate it entirely as it contributes to heterosexist and heteronormative attitudes.

CONCLUSION

Drag has, in some form or another, always been a part of the performing arts, especially in Newfoundland. While many might not recognize it as drag, famous Newfoundlanders such as comedians Mary Walsh, Cathy Jones, Greg Malone, Andy Jones, and the late Tommy Sexton frequently use drag in their iconic productions such as political sketch show *CODCO* and its successor *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Through becoming the alter-ego of the Queer Mummer, I am able to reference this history and herstory, reclaim traditionally heterosexual, male spaces as queer, feminine spaces, and challenge heterosexist attitudes that are still prevalent not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but in Western society as a whole. Through The Queer Mummer, I hope to educate fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to recognize this part of our identities, and hope that we can celebrate it, whether it be through events like the folklife Mummers Festival and by supporting local drag shows. Both mummering and drag allow for a break from the status quo and remind us to have fun and to be seriously foolish once in a while. So, let us dress up and dance until the sun comes up.

Appendix

Installation photos











Fig. 21-30 Installation shots of *The Queer Mummer*, 2018.

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